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**¶11. (U) RULING COALITION SUPPORTS PM KOSOR:** Following its decision to expel former PM Ivo Sanader from party membership, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) leadership headed by Prime Minister and party president Jadranka Kosor met January 5 with its coalition partners, the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS), the Croatian Social Liberal Party (HSLS), and the Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS). All participants expressed faith in the stability of the ruling coalition, and PM Kosor stated that the coalition was "stronger than ever." HSS president Josic Friscic said that Kosor has shown the HDZ had only one president, and the new president of the HSLS, Darinko Kosor, noted that much more important issues now awaited the government. Milorad Pupovac of the SDSS said that no one should seek to destabilize the government at this point, but he added that the government should revise its program and "liberate itself from the legacy of old coalition agreements." A meeting of the ruling coalition is expected to take place within two weeks to discuss proposals from coalition partners about the future functioning of the government.

**¶12. (U) PRESIDENT MESIC COMMUTES SENTENCE OF CONTROVERSIAL WAR CRIMINALS:** President Mesic reduced the sentence of Sinisa Rimac from eight to seven years for the illegal detention, abuse, and murder of Serb civilians in Pakracka Poljana in 1991. The original 1999 trial resulted in minimal sentences or acquittals for the six individuals on trial for the 1991 war crimes, but a 2005 retrial ordered by the Supreme Court resulted in harsher punishments of three to 12 years for five of the defendants, including the eight year sentence for Rimac. In a separate case, Rimac admitted to involvement in the killing of a Serb family in Zagreb, including a 12-year-old girl, but all suspects were acquitted in a 1992 trial due to procedural errors in the investigation. Mesic's office has not yet issued an explanation for his decision to commute the sentence.

WALKER